

# THE UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD

(A Central University established in 1974 by an Act of the Parliament)  
CENTRAL UNIVERSITY P. O. HYDERABAD-500 134.



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Ref. No.

Date :

To

Mr. Zafar Fatehally  
Editor  
Newsletter for Birdwatchers.

Dear Mr. Fatehally,

Thank you for your letter of some time ago which acknowledged my piece on Bulbuls. I look forward to seeing it in the Newsletter.

As you suggested in that letter, I am sending you a list of confirmed bird sightings in this university's campus. In fact it is not quite complete, because a few species like the swifts and swallows I have not yet put in. Also, I have particular difficulty with the smaller birds, which move so often and so quickly and through undergrowth, and even more because their representations in the birdbooks are not really quite immediately helpful. However, I am constantly trying to pin down what I see.

There are, by my reckoning, at least another as many (i.e., another 70 or 80) species which live or pass through this campus. Some have (I hope only temporarily) stopped visiting, e.g., the Blackwinged Stilt. I have not seen a kestrel for over a year, though two winters I saw one each, and one winter a pair.

I am also enclosing one issue of the Campus Nature News, which I have been bringing out for over a year now and hope to continue for as long as possible.

Meantime, with best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Sudhakar Marathe  
Convenor  
Nature Club Committee.

30th August, 1989  
Sudhakar Marathe  
Dept. of English  
University of Hyderabad  
Hyderabad 500 134.

Enclosed: 1. checklist of confirmed bird sightings  
2. one issue of Nature News.

LIST OF CONFIRMED SIGHTINGS OF BIRDS IN THE CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD,  
GACHI BOWLI, HYDERABAD 500 134, OBSERVATIONS BETWEEN OCTOBER 1983 AND AUGUST 1989.

(The Ali numerical references cite the Ali-Ripley Handbook, compact edition, 1983)

1.	Ali 5	Dabchick/Little Grebe	<u>Tachybaptus ruficollis</u>	
2.	Ali 28	Little Cormorant	<u>Phalacrocorax niger</u>	
3.	Ali 36	Grey Heron	<u>Ardea cinerea</u>	
4.	Ali 42	Paddybird/Pond Heron	<u>Ardeola grayii</u>	
5.	Ali 44	Cow/Cattle Egret	<u>Bubulcus ibis</u>	
6.	Ali 47	Smaller Egret	<u>Egretta intermedia</u>	(not common)
7.	Ali 49	Little Egret	<u>Egretta garzetta</u>	
8.	Ali 52	Night Heron	<u>Nycticorax nycticorax</u>	
9.	Ali 61	Openbill Stork	<u>Anastomus oscitans</u>	
10.	Ali 97	Spotbill Duck	<u>Anas poecilorhyncha p.</u>	(not common)
11.	Ali 133	Pariah Kite	<u>Milvus migrans</u>	
12.	Ali 135	Brahminy Kite	<u>Haliastur indus</u>	(not common)
13.	Ali 139	Shikra	<u>Accipiter badius</u>	
14.	Ali 186	Scavenger Vulture	<u>Neophron percnopterus</u>	(possible nesting)
15.	Ali 190	Pallid/Pale Harrier	<u>Circus macrourus</u>	(every winter)
16.	Ali 193	Marsh Harrier	<u>Circus aeruginosus</u>	(every winter)
17.	Ali 222	Kestrel	<u>Falco tinnunculus</u>	(not since 1987)
18.	Ali 246	Grey Partridge	<u>Francolinus pondicerinus</u>	
19.	Ali 255	Jungle Bush Quail	<u>Perdica asiatica</u>	
20.	Ali 275	Red Spurfowl	<u>Gallus spadicea</u>	
21.	Ali 311	Peacock/Peafowl	<u>Pavo cristatus</u>	
22.	Ali 350	Coot	<u>Fulica atra atra</u>	
23.	Ali 366	Redwattled Lapwing	<u>Vanellus indicus</u>	
24.	Ali 370	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	<u>Vanellus malabaricus</u>	
25.	Ali 416	Little Stint	<u>Calidris minuta</u>	
26.	Ali 430	Blackwinged Stilt	<u>Himantopus himantopus</u>	(not since 1987)
27.	Ali 487	Indian Sandgrouse	<u>Pterocles exilis erlangeri</u>	
28.	Ali 516	Blue Rock Pigeon	<u>Columba livia</u>	
29.	Ali 534	Collared Dove	<u>Streptopelia decaocto</u>	
30.	Ali 541	Little Brown Dove	<u>Streptopelia senegalensis</u>	
31.	Ali 550	Rose Ringed Parakeet	<u>Psittacula krameri</u>	
32.	Ali 558	Blossom Headed Parakeet	<u>Psittacula cyanocephala</u>	
33.	Ali 571	Pied Crested Cuckoo	<u>Clamator jacobinus</u>	
34.	Ali 573	Brainfeverbird	<u>Cuculus varius</u>	
35.	Ali 584	Indian Plaintive Cuckoo	<u>Cacomantis merulinus</u>	
36.	Ali 590	Koel/Cuckoo	<u>Eudynamis scolopacea</u>	
37.	Ali 600	Coucal/Crow Pheasant	<u>Centropus sinensis</u>	
38.	Ali 652	Spotted Owlet	<u>Athene brama</u>	
39.	Ali 680	Indian Nightjar	<u>Caprimulgus asiaticus</u>	
40.	Ali 719	Lesser Pied Kingfisher	<u>Ceryle rudia</u>	
41.	Ali 722	Common Kingfisher	<u>Alcedo atthis</u>	
42.	Ali 735	Whitebreasted Kingfisher	<u>Halcyon smyrnensis</u>	
43.	Ali 750	Little Green Bee-eater	<u>Merops orientalis</u>	
44.	Ali 755	Indian Roller/Blue Jay	<u>Coracias benghalensis</u>	
45.	Ali 763	Hoopoe	<u>Upupa epops</u>	
46.	Ali 792	Crimson-breasted Barbet	<u>Megalaima haemacephala indica</u>	
47.	Ali 877	Redwinged Bush-lark	<u>Mirafra erythroptera</u>	
48.	Ali 878	Ashy-crowned Finch-lark	<u>Eremopterix grisea</u>	
49.	Ali 902	Syke's Crested Lark	<u>Galerida deva</u>	
50.	Ali 933	Indian Grey Shrike	<u>Lanius excubitor</u>	
51.	Ali 940	Bay-backed Shrike	<u>Lanius vittatus</u>	
52.	Ali 946	Rufous-backed Shrike	<u>Lanius schach</u>	
53.	Ali 949	Brown Shrike	<u>Lanius cristatus</u>	(not since 1985)
54.	Ali 952	Golden Oriole	<u>Oriolus oriolus</u>	
55.	Ali 963	Drongo/King Crow	<u>Dicruridae adsimilia</u>	
56.	Ali 994	Brahminy Myna	<u>Sturnus pagodarum</u>	

57.	Ali 996	Rosy Pastor/Starling	<u>Sturnus roseus</u>	
58.	Ali 1006	Common/Indian Myna	<u>Acridotheres fuscus</u>	
59.	Ali 1032	Indian Tree Pie	<u>Dendrocitta vagabunda</u>	
60.	Ali 1049	Indian House Crow	<u>Corvus splendens splendens</u>	
61.	Ali 1098	Common Iora	<u>Aegithina tiphia</u>	
62.	Ali 1128	Redvented Bulbul	<u>Pycnonotus cafer</u>	
63.	Ali 1231	Yelloweyed Babbler	<u>Chrysomma sinensis</u>	
64.	Ali 1265	Jungle Babbler	<u>Turdoides striatus</u>	
65.	Ali 1498	Fantailed Warbler	<u>Cisticola juncides</u>	
66.	Ali 1538	Tailorbird	<u>Orthotomus sutoris</u>	
67.	Ali 1644	Bluethroat (Northern?)	<u>Erithacus svecicus</u>	(March sightings)
68.	Ali 1661	Magpie Robin	<u>Copsychus saularis</u>	(Not since 1984)
69.	Ali 1679	Plumbeous Redstart	<u>Phoenicurus schrueros</u>	
70.	Ali 1700	Pied Bush Chat	<u>Saxicola caprata</u>	
71.	Ali 1720	Indian Robin	<u>Saxicoloides fulicata</u>	
72.	Ali 1876	Yellow Wagtail	<u>Motacilla flava</u>	
73.	Ali 1886/5	Pied Wagtail	<u>Motacilla alba</u>	
74.	Ali 1891	Large Pied Wagtail (?)	<u>Motacilla maderaspatensis</u> (?)	
75.	Ali 1907/8	Purple Rumped Sunbird	<u>Nectarinia zeylonica</u>	
76.	Ali 1917	Purple Sunbird	<u>Nectarinia asiatica</u>	
77.	Ali 1933	White-eye	<u>Zosterops palpebrosa</u>	
78.	Ali 1938	House Sparrow	<u>Passer domesticus</u>	
79.	Ali 1957	Baya (Weaverbird)	<u>Ploceus philippinus</u>	
80.	Ali 1964	Red Munia	<u>Estrilda amandava amandava</u>	
81.	Ali 1966	White-throated Munia	<u>Lonchura malabarica</u>	

(Observations of Sudhakar Marathe, Department of English, University of Hyderabad, Gachi Bowli, Hyderabad 500 134; Residence: Unit 23, Teachers' Hostels, University of Hyderabad, Gachi Bowli, Hyderabad 500 134.) 25.8.1989

(For further information, contact Sudhakar Marathe--addresses above--Convenor, the University of Hyderabad Nature Club).

"I was interested in everything, from clouds to lichen," John Ruskin.

#### OUR NATURE CLUB

Dear Friends, in this first number of this year's Nature News, we welcome you to this fascinating campus and invite you to join the Nature Club. Our Club has in fact existed since 1984, but last year we formalized it somewhat and started this newsletter, which has now run for one year. We hope to do better during 1989-90 and your help and suggestions will be very welcome.

Please read the brief statement of John Ruskin (from Praeterita) quoted above. That fits the essential definition of members of our Club--anyone who finds nature interesting qualifies for membership. Essentially, that is a sufficient bond among us all.

However, our Club also hopes to be able to share knowledge, information and pleasure, which it tries to do by means of this newsletter, and by utilizing opportunities for observation of our surroundings.

The Club also has another most crucial motive--to protect nature in this campus as much as possible and to try to help the University in making its contribution to the task of conservation of our threatened environment.

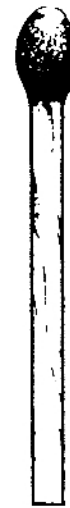
In addition, on special occasions like the Wild Life Week at the end of September, we organize special walks in the woods, and also special competitions in which we always hope everyone may participate. About all such activities, information will be posted in this newsletter and on notice boards.

Meantime, please join the Club and help us make a success of our duty and pleasure.

For further information, please contact any one of the following: Daniel Roberts (Men's Hostels & Dept. of English); V.K. Karthika (Women's Hostel & Dept. of English); Dr. E.D. Jemmis (Chemistry); Drs. V. Srivastava, S.P. Tewari and G. Rajaram (Physics) and S. Marathe (Dept. of English). They can also enrol you for the July-1989-June 1990 year (Individual Membership Rs.10, Family Membership Rs.15. Membership includes issues of Nature News). Editor.



**One tree can make  
3,000,000 matches.**



**One match can burn  
3,000,000 trees.**

ARTICLE ON VENOMOUS SNAKES, RUSSELL'S VIPER, PAGES 5-6

(Advertisement regarding fires borrowed from National Geographic)

## TRANSLATORS WANTED

Our campus does have venomous snakes, all the four major varieties of them-- the Cobra, the Krait, about which we have already published illustrated articles, and the Russell's Viper (see pages 5-6 below) as well as the Saw-Scaled Viper.

Our articles are specially designed to help you identify these snakes, so that you can keep out of their way, protect them, and yet know what to do if anyone is in fact bitten by them. EXCEPT IN EMERGENCIES, there is neither need nor justification for killing even venomous snakes.

We need to translate these articles into TELUGU so that many more University of Hyderabad people can read them. Contact the Editor of Nature News.

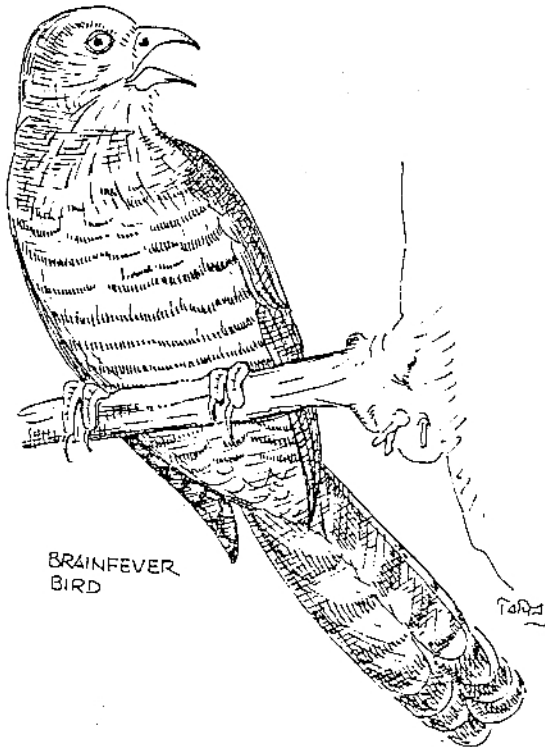
## THE BRAINFEVER BIRD !

Yes, there is such a thing as Brain-Fever Bird. Just in this season you must watch out for this bird. Brain-Fever Birds live here round the year yet one may not even suspect their presence, because they are shy, and also silent in other seasons.

But in this season, Lord! do they talk! They speak so much, like some person in feverish delirium, which perhaps explains their name. They do

One may not actually see this bird for long--I saw my first Brainfever Bird thirty-five years after I first heard its call! Careless looking will confuse it with the Shikra Hawk or a large dove.

The Brainfever Bird's voice is unparalleled and is nearly always to be heard these days. Usually it begins on a trill, a crescendoing series of double notes, short and repeated, till the voice breaks, the pitch comes down, like this:



BRAINFEVER  
BIRD

(Picture: Vipin Srivastava)

have other names, equally descriptive --Hawk-Cuckoo, because it is in fact a cuckoo as the name describes, and the bird does resemble the Kawk (Shikra); of a similar size and build and also with striations or stripes across the chest which are biscuit-coloured in both

The double note is repeated anywhere from five to ten times. Then the trill is followed by the more familiar, more easily noticed, longer sustained call that sounds just the way its name does in English in its pitch and tune. There are three syllables in it, Brain-Fe-Ver, the first said long and separately, the last two said less long and descending in pitch, again, and again, and again:

going on and on, sometimes for fifteen or twenty minutes at a go. I once waited by the Life Sciences' lawn, watching and listening to a Brainfever Bird for over fifteen minutes, till I got tired and fled!

This cuckoo is much shorter than the familiar Koel (the Koel is 16 to 18 inches long), about 12 inches or 33 cms. It has a prominently striped tail, grey-black with black-and-white stripes; its wings are a dull dust-grey, so also its head; the claws are yellow. Its distinguishing marks are on neck and breast: bright biscuit colour with up-and-down black stripes on the neck and grey-white breast with horizontal, broken, biscuit stripes. It flies uncomfortably, like other long-tailed birds. Do listen to it.

## RAINBOW

There is the rainbow!  
Far far above me  
In the sky.

The rainbow need not  
Work

Because it is free.

It is free to go  
To the hills  
And the plains  
Flowing across the sky  
Like a fountain  
After rain

In the sun.

K. Vikram (Class VI)  
Navodaya Vidyalaya

## A WALK

I went to walk in  
Nature  
I saw birds flying  
From their nests  
Kites floating  
On high

To drink tea  
To note the names  
Of birds  
And trees

Wasn't it a pleasure  
To spell and shape  
Names of things  
In beautiful Nature!

On my walk I heard  
A bird  
Singing,  
Lucky duck!

D. Praveen (Class VI)  
Navodaya Vidyalaya

## DON'T YOU KNOW?

In the open place  
There is a lake  
Nearby is a Rock  
Palace!

In the lake there  
is a snake

And on a log  
Don't you know  
There is a frog!

K. Vikram (Class VI)  
Navodaya Vidyalaya

OH!

Oh the sun is rising  
Is rising  
Rising  
In the sky

Oh the birds are singing  
Are singing  
Singing  
In the sky

The wind is blowing  
Is blowing  
Blowing  
In the sky

And oh the trees  
The trees are tossing  
Are tossing  
Tossing  
Their heads  
In the sky

Beautiful rising  
Blowing  
Tossing  
In the sky.

M.G. Swapnika  
Class VI

Navodaya Vidyalaya

H... E... L... P !!!!!!!

Mr. Satyanarayana (M.A. III, English) brought news this morning which his good friends conveyed to him--people are netting and clubbing to death rabbits on our campus. Rabbits (and other creatures) have been netted or trapped here for a long time, without right or permission. It is wrong because first of all the campus is OURS, and others should not trespass. Next it is also wrong because there are just not enough of these creatures to go round. Finally, it is also wrong because these folk SELL them !!!

Does anyone have ideas about preventing hunting on the campus? Please let us know. Please report such things to us.

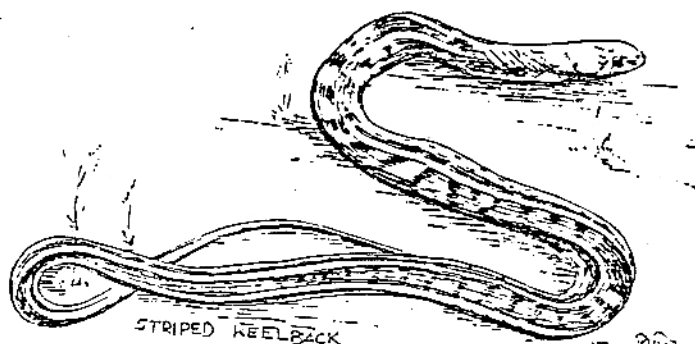
AND PLEASE HELP in any way you can in preventing predation and depredation.



## STRIPED KEELBACK

The first certain sighting of a Striped Keelback snake (HARMLESS!!) occurred this evening--Daniel Roberts found it and caught it to show others.

It is a beautifully blue-green snake with dark black markings and dark head-to-tail stripes (hence its name). It is one of the four Keelback snakes found on the campus. If you spot it, do stand and enjoy its mar-



(These poems record in original ways experiences & impressions of children who went with me on walks in the campus; their efforts are charming no doubt but they are significant because of their genuineness. These poems have been very slightly touched, with the approval of their authors. Our thanks to the poets for contributing to Nature News. Editor)

"Those damned goats are the curse of Asia. God gave us a fertile land, covered with magnificent trees and soil rich enough to feed all men. But the Devil got even by giving us just one thing. Goats. And they took care of the forests. Ate all the young trees. And the rich fields. Ate the cover off and turned them to deserts. Probably the most destructive animal created. Much more dangerous than the cobra."

James Michener, Caravans.

#### Why We Should NOT Allow Goat and Cattle Grazing

Goats (like sheep), eat fresh shoots of grass and plant, they nibble off even newly budding thorns, before the thorns harden. Thus, first, they stunt growth. Next, they crop grass so close to the ground that re-generation of grass slows down, and repeated grazing exposes the vulnerable top-soil to ravages of wind, rain, and trampling hooves, so that erosion is heavy, thus further inhibiting fresh growth. Their manure is effective ONLY IF they are tied in fallow fields. Cattle do not destroy vegetation in the same way, except in the summer, when they eat even bitter neem's fresh foliage. But they need to scratch often and heavily, so they break saplings. WORST OF ALL are the goatherds and shepherds who follow these creatures, for they are unscrupulous cutters of wood and they kill or take anything else they can. Help prevent these menaces on our campus.

#### OUR UGLY GARBAGE

There is near-total nonchalance towards the increase in litter scattered all over this campus. Very soon our campus will be no different from any filthy area in Hyderabad city. This being an institution of higher learning, really it is very surprising that there should be such shoddy planning (or it is in fact lack of planning?) for waste disposal and drainage systems. The systems should be a part of our basic infrastructure. But in our case they seem to come as afterthoughts. Even the afterthoughts are more ad hoc than they need be.

Increase in amenities and in student and other population has brought an increase in the quantity of rubbish. So right now there is a desperate need --both aesthetic and practical--of dustbins and other means of garbage disposal. It is true that people should not throw their rubbish around, but the absence of bins, for instance, leaves them little choice but to scatter the litter. It is the responsibility of the Health and other officers more or less directly involved with the upkeep of the University to solve this problem and prevent its aggravation.

A special difficulty concerns the hostels. There the garbage disposal does not go beyond merely dumping things outside the buildings! It is really quite pathetic that we have no incinerator, especially in the women's hostel. Such facilities need not be argued for. Even if they do not occur to planners and administrators, once they have been told about them, the facilities ought to be provided just as soon as possible; but years have gone by without an incinerator. Surely, everything need not always be spelt out?

And all the time it is shameful that visitors come to see the once beautiful campus, and instead find "picturesque" scattering of rubbish.

So if not out of forethought, if not out of consideration, then at least as a matter of pride in the University for which we are all responsible, we hope the administration will tackle this problem with necessary urgency. For instead of appreciating the natural pleasures we end up wincing and pinching our noses at unsightly garbage and smelly drainage!

Please, everyone, help in keeping our campus clean and beautiful!

6 June 1989

Kobita Dass

#### I SAW A MONITOR LIZARD!

My mother saw it first and told me about it. She said it eats children, it is dangerous! But my Uncle says that monitor lizards are harmless, in fact they are useful creatures, because they eat bugs and frogs and such things. It is a slow big lizard, and yet it is not poisonous.

13 July 1989

Bharat Ramanan (Class IV)



## COMMON VENOMOUS SNAKES III: THE RUSSELL'S VIPER

Last week, a visitor brought news of a snake captured in a sack, alive. One of the workmen engaged in clearing the area around the hostels had caught it. There was no need for me to open the sack to identify the snake. From within I could hear the loud and distinctive hiss of a RUSSELL'S VIPER in a nasty temper. In my presence the workman let out the angry snake and then re-captured it, seizing it expertly behind the neck. The man was aware of the danger and was obviously quite adept at catching snakes--even venomous ones. I was curious to know what the man would have done had he been bitten, as indeed many seasoned snake-handlers are, at times. Sadly, he had no faith in the doctor but believed that his village magic-man could cure him with his "jadu". One can only hope his skill will serve him unerringly in the future. BUT FOR GOODNESS SAKE, DO NOT TRY THIS "JADU" IF BITTEN: TRY A DOCTOR AND THE ANTI-VENOM SERUM.

RUSSELL'S VIPER (*Vipera russellii*)

IDENTIFICATION: The Russell's Viper is a large, very thick, brown to dark-brown snake, with dark and distinctly rounded sizeable spots along the back. The symmetrical chain-like pattern along the back (see picture overleaf) distinguishes the Russell's Viper from Sand-Boas, which are smaller and irregularly mottled, rather than spotted, in design. Disturbed, a Russell's Viper will emit a loud hiss as warning, as though its thick, heavy appearance is not enough to scare one. The snake is really rather large, and a big female may weigh nearly 2 kilograms!

So, Russell's Vipers can be identified by their fat bodies, which may be from an average of 1 metre to a large 1.8 metres long, and suddenly tapering at the tail; by the distinctive, somewhat circular markings on a brown body; and if disturbed, by a continuous and rather loud hiss.

REMEMBER, please, that while the Viper may look sluggish, being so fat, it can strike even backwards, and must never be taken lightly.

DISTRIBUTION: Russell's Vipers are found throughout India. On this campus, they are likely to be found in the denser areas of the scrub and bush. As they do not scuttle off when you approach, there is always the possibility of stepping on one inadvertently. So when walking through the bush and near rocks, do keep your eyes and ears open. REMEMBER, when disturbed, the Viper moves FAST.

FOOD: Mainly rodents (and there are rats, mice, chipmunks, etc., in the campus); occasionally the Russell's Viper will also take an unwary bird.

VENOM AND FIRST-AID: The venom of the Russell's Viper is haemo-toxic (i.e., it affects the blood), causing clots, severe internal bleeding, damage to the tissues. The Viper delivers a rather large quantity of venom, so that even though its venom is not as toxic as a Cobra's, its bites are extremely dangerous.

If someone is bitten by a Russell's Viper, tie a tourniquet above the site of the bite (remember to keep it from becoming too tight) and then take the victim immediately to the nearest hospital. Keep the victim calm. Do NOT cut or burn the site of the bite for that can make things much worse.

Our own Health Centre carries the combined Anti-Venom Serum.

The Russell's Viper is the third of the BIG FOUR venomous snakes of the campus (the first two being the Common Indian Cobra and the Krait). The Viper is definitely a dangerous snake; whenever you see it, try to report your sighting. But, otherwise, LEAVE THE VIPER ALONE, let him go his own way, for though venomous, he is still our friend because it helps to keep down rodent population. If you find one in a risky place (e.g., a bedroom) close the place and report to someone who knows about snakes. DO NOT TRY TO KILL OR HANDLE THE RUSSELL'S VIPER. (When in doubt, consult Whitaker's book).

March, 1989

Daniel Roberts

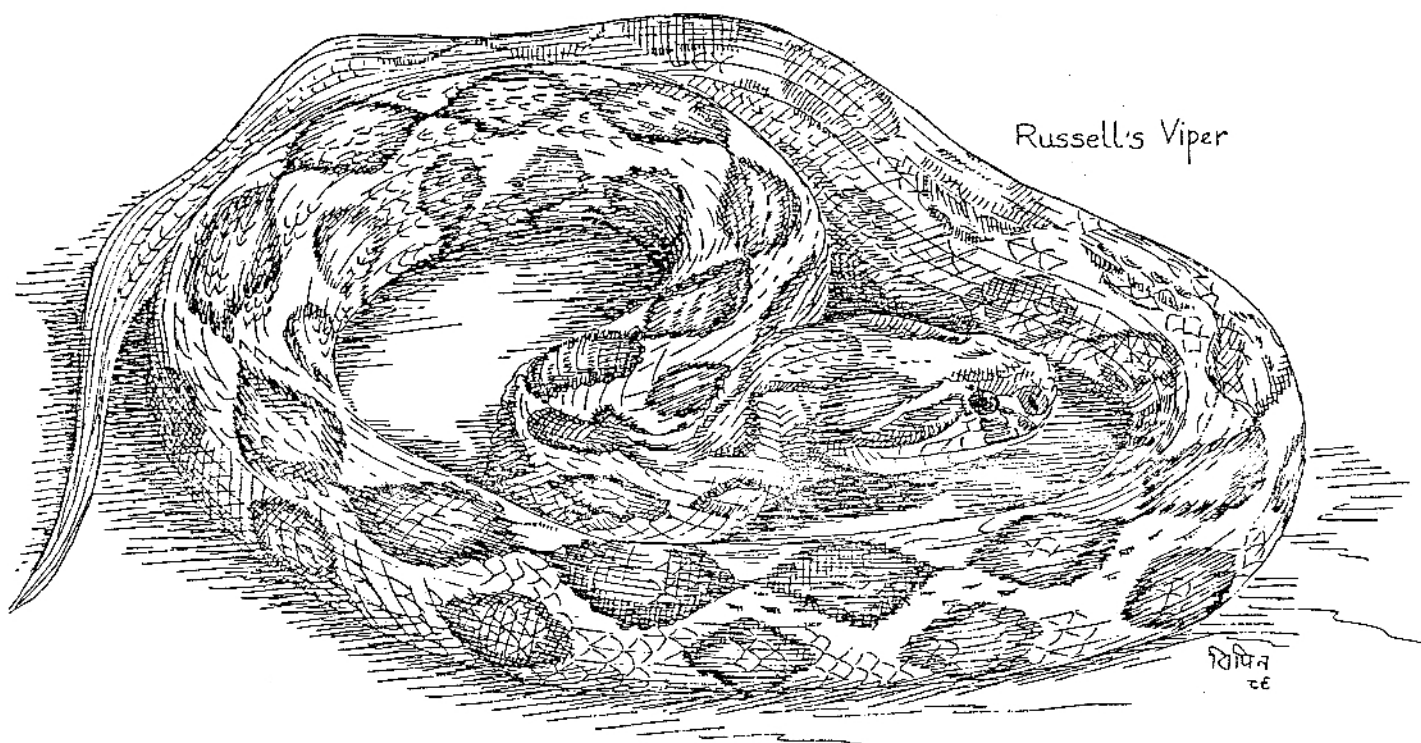


## THE RUSSELL'S VIPER



A large, fattish snake, between 1 and 1.8 metres long, with prominent circular markings along the upper body, generally a brown to dark-brown colour; its tail tapers suddenly; it appears BUT IS NOT a sluggish snake; it keeps in the bushes or near rocks, and merges with its background, so take care; when disturbed, it hisses a loud hiss; its venom affects the blood, and must be treated seriously; take victim to a hospital immediately. Do not handle, just leave well alone.

Our Health Centre keeps the necessary anti-venom serum.



Russell's Viper

Illustration by Vipin Srivastava

JOIN THE NATURE CLUB: Contact S. Marathe (English department) or any of the others mentioned on the first page of this issue. Please help us share the beauty of this campus and protect our fragile environment.

The newsletter Nature News also needs your news, anything you have seen or enjoyed in the natural environment here on the campus, any information you would like to share with others. Please send your news items to Editor, Nature News, c/o Department of English, University of Hyderabad.

Membership subscription of the Club is Rs.10/- per annum for Individuals and Rs.15/- per annum for families. Members receive copies of Nature News.

Nature News needs help with pictures; if you are good at ink-drawing, do help us; pictures must be appropriate for the news they accompany and they should xerox well.

This issue of Nature News was edited by Sudhakar Marathe. Xeroxing, courtesy School of Humanities.